

Message Text

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INFO AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI

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CINCPAC HONO HA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BANGKOK 20092

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV PINT TH

SUBJECT: SOCIAL ACTION PARTY VIEW OF THAI POLITICAL SITUATION

SUMMARY: DURING WHAT TURNED OUT TO BE A FOUR HOUR DINNER-LECTURE WITH EMBASSY OFFICERSRECENTLY, NIPHAT BUKHANASUT, SECRETARY TO THE MINISTER OF FINANCE BUNCHU ROTCHANASATHIAN, EXPOUNDED ON A WIDE RANGE OF TOPICS INCLUDING: THE OBJECTIVES OF THE KHUKRIT GOVERNMENT, A DESCRIPTION OF THE FOUR FACTIONS CONTESTING THE NATION'S LEADERSHIP, THE DEATH OF THE STUDENT MOVEMENT, THE DANGER TO REFORM FROM ENTRENCHED BUREAUCRATS AND THE NEED FOR GOOD YOUNG MEN TO COME TO THE RESCUE OF THEIR COUNTRY. NIPHAT, WHO HAS WORKED WITH BUNCHU FOR ONLY FIVE MONTHS, WAS PROBABLY REFLECTING THE VIEWS OF TOP SOCIAL ACTION PARTY PLANNERS WITH WHOM HE CONSTANTLY ASSOCIATES. END SUMMARY.

KHUKRIT GOVERNMENT OBJECTIVES

1. NIPHAT BUKHANASUT, DURING A VIRTUAL FOUR-HOUR MONOLOGUE

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SEPTEMBER 17, SAID THAT ONE OF THE PRIME OBJECTIVES OF

PRIME MINISTER AND SOCIAL ACTION PARTY (SAP) LEADER KHUKRIT PRAMOT WAS TO MAKE SURE THAT THAILAND DOES NOT RETURN TO THE PRE-OCTOBER 1973 WAY OF DOING THINGS. SAP LEADERS WANT TO MAKE SURE THAT NO MATTER WHO IS IN POWER A RETURN TO A MILITARY REGIME WILL BE AVOIDED. TO ACHIEVE THIS OBJECTIVE, SAP IS TRYING TO WRITE NEW GROUND RULES FOR THAILAND WHICH INVOLVE GREATER POLITICAL PARTICIPATION BY THE PEOPLE IN GOVERNMENT. ACCORDING TO NIPHAT, THE GOVERNMENT'S TAMBON IMPROVEMENT BILL WAS AIMED AT THIS END. THE BILL'S FIRST OBJECTIVE WAS TO CONVINCE THE PUBLIC THAT THE GOVERNMENT CARES. THE SECOND OBJECTIVE WAS TO STIMULATE THE ECONOMY AT THE LOCAL LEVEL. THE SAP PLANNERS WERE UNDER NO ILLUSION THAT SOME OF THE MONEY GOING TO THE LOCAL PEOPLE WOULD BE MISUSED, BUT THEY HOPED THAT AT LEAST SIXTY PERCENT WOULD DO SOME GOOD. THE GOVERNMENT IS FOLLOWING UP THE TAMBON IMPROVEMENT BILL WITH LEGISLATION AUTHORIZING NEW ELECTIONS FOR TAMBON CHIEFS (KAMNAN) AND VILLAGE CHIEFS (PHUYAIBAN). SAP'S EXPECTATION IS THAT THE LOCAL PEOPLE WILL TAKE A HARD LOOK AT THEIR LOCAL LEADERS AND A GREATER INTEREST IN POLITICS. THE NEW BUDGET BILL SHOULD REINFORCE LOCAL GOVERNMENT BECAUSE IT HAS PROVISIONS SIMILAR TO THE TAMBON IMPROVEMENT BILL.

2. THE GOVERNMENT HOPES TO GET MUCH OF THE MONEY IT NEEDS THROUGH THE STIMULATION OF EXPORTS, ITS SECOND MAJOR OBJECTIVE. NIPHAT SAID THAT THE THAI GOVERNMENT IS NOW INVOLVED IN ONE OF THE GREATEST EXPORT PROMOTION DRIVES THAT IT HAS EVER MADE.

3. NIPHAT SAID THAT THE THINKING IN THE HIGHER SAP CIRCLES IS THAT THE KHUKRIT GOVERNMENT HAS TWO YEARS IN WHICH TO FULFILL ITS BASIC GOALS. THE TWO YEAR LIMIT IS THE GOVERNMENT'S ESTIMATION OF HOW LONG IT WILL TAKE THE PRESSURE FROM HANOI TO BUILD UP SIGNIFICANTLY. NIPHAT THOUGHT THAT KHUKRIT'S GAME PLAN CALLS FOR ELECTIONS IN OCTOBER 1976.

WHO RUNS THAILAND?

4. NIPHAT ARGUED THAT THERE WERE FOUR BASIC COMPETITORS
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FOR THE NATION'S LEADERSHIP -- THE PRIME MINISTER'S SOCIAL ACTION PARTY, DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER PRAMAN'S THAI NATION PARTY, ARMY COMMANDER IN CHIEF GENERAL KRIT SIWARA, AND LT. GENERAL WITHUN YASAWAT, FORMER COMMANDER OF THAI VOLUNTEERS WHO FOUGHT IN LAOS. NIPHAT ARGUED THAT THE FIRST THREE FACTIONS BALANCED EACH OTHER OFF. WITHUN, IN NIPHAT'S EYES, WAS TAKING AN INDEPENDENT ROLE, THROWING HIS WEIGHT BEHIND ONE OR MORE OF THE OTHER CONTENDERS ON ANY PARTICULAR

ISSUE.

5. THERE WAS TREMENDOUS COMPETITION INVOLVED IN THE SIMPLE MATTER OF MAKING GENERAL KRIT MINISTER OF DEFENSE. THE PRESENT MIISTER, MG PRAMAN ADIREKSAN, WAS UNWILLING TO GIVE UP THAT JOB. THE SAP GAME PLAN WAS TO ALLOW THE PRAMAN-KRIT COMPETITION TO TAKE ITS NORMAL COURSE. THE RESULT, IN NIPHAT'S VIEW, MIGHT BE THE ELIMINATION OF KRIT, THOUGH HE DID NOT SPELL OUT ALL OF THE CONSEQUENCES OF THIS OUTCOME.

6. THERE WERE TWO IMPORTANT WATERSHEDS COMING UP IN THE COMPETITION AMONG THESE FOUR POLITICAL FORCES. THE FIRST WAS SEPTEMBER 30, WHEN GENERAL KRIT RETIRES. KRIT IS WELL AWARE THAT, ONCE HE RETIRES, HE WILL LOSE INFLUENCE IN THE ARMY, REGARDLESS OF WHOM HE HAS PICKED TO SUCCEED HIM. TO COMPENSATE FOR THIS LOSS OF INFLUENCE, KRIT DESPERATELY NEEDS THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE POSITION. THE NEXT HURDLE WILL BE DURING MARCH-APRIL, 1976, WHICH IS THE TIME THE ARMY SHIFTS TROOP COMMANDERS. AT THAT TIME, IF KRIT IS STILL IN THE GAME, HE WILL HAVE TO PROTECT COMMANDERS LOYAL TO HIMSELF FROM PRAMAN'S ANTICIPATED ATTEMPT TO INSERT OFFICERS ASSOCIATED WITH THE PHIN CHUNHAWAN-PHAO SIYANON CLIQUE WHO HAVE BEEN ON THE SHELF SINCE LOSING OUT IN THE COUP OF 1957.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BANGKOK 20092

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

ELECTION RESULTS PREDICTION

7. UNLIKE OTHER COMMENTATORS, NIPHAT FELT THAT, IF ELECTIONS WERE HELD TODAY, THE MAKEUP OF THE NEW PARLIAMENT WOULD BE SIMILAR TO THE PRESENT ONE. SAP AND THE DEMOCRATS WOULD GAIN 10 SEATS APIECE, THE NEW FORCE PARTY MIGHT ALSO GAIN A FEW AND THE SOCIAL JUSTICE PARTY WOULD DISINTEGRATE. THERE WAS A HIGH PROBABILITY THAT THE THAI NATION PARTY WOULD ALSO GAIN A FEW SEATS, AND THAT A FEW OF THE SMALL PARTIES WOULD DISAPPEAR. NIPHAT ARGUED THAT, WHILE ALL THE OTHER POLITICAL PARTIES WERE HAVING FINANCIAL PROBLEMS, THE THAI NATION PARTY WAS THE ONLY PARTY MAKING MONEY OUT OF ITS PARTICIPATION IN THE COALITION CABINET.

THE STUDENT MOVEMENT

8. THE STUDENT MOVEMENT AS AN INDEPENDENT FORCE IS DEAD. IT IS NOW ONLY A TOOL OF OTHER GROUPS WHICH MANIPULATE IT FOR THEIR OWN ENDS. ONE OF THE MAJOR CONTRIBUTING FACTORS
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TO ITS DEMISE WAS THE NAIVETE OF THE STUDENT LEADERS. THE GOVERNMENT COULD HAVE PUBLICLY DESTROYED THE STUDENT MOVEMENT DURING THE LAMPHUN INCIDENT (BANGKOK 16355) BUT THE GOVERNMENT RECOGNIZES THAT THE MOVEMENT SERVES A USEFUL PURPOSE AS A CHANNEL OF PROTEST, AS WELL AS A TOOL TO COUNTER THE CONSERVATIVES. THE GOVERNMENT HAS MAINTAINED GOOD CONTACTS WITH THE STUDENT LEADERS. NIPHAT SAID THAT STUDENT LEADERS ARE IN THE PAY OF BOTH THE LEFT AND THE RIGHT, AS WELL AS OF THE GOVERNMENT.

THE BUREAUCRATIC DANGER

9. NIPHAT ARGUED THAT SAP HAS A RESPECTABLE CHANCE OF COMPETING WITH ITS POLITICAL OPPONENTS. THE REAL STUMBLING BLOCK TO WHAT THE GOVERNMENT WANTED TO DO, HOWEVER, WAS THE ENTRENCHED BUREAUCRACY. THE RECENT POST AND TELEGRAPH WORKERS STRIKE WAS ANOTHER IN A SERIES OF CONDITIONED REFLEXES WHEREBY THE BUREAUCRACY SOUGHT TO PROTECT ITSELF. NIPHAT WENT INTO GREAT DETAIL DISCUSSING THE RECENT FERTILIZER SCANDAL, CONCLUDING THAT IT WAS NOT THE POLITICIANS BUT THE BUREAUCRATS WHO MADE THE MONEY. IN DISCUSSING THE RECENTLY ANNOUNCED MINISTRY OF INTERIOR REASSIGNMENTS (BANGKOK 20010), NIPHAT SAID THAT THE CABINET HAD BEEN

SIXTY PERCENT EFFECTIVE IN PROMOTING CAPABLE PEOPLE.
GOOD HELP IS HARD TO FIND

10. THE GOVERNMENT HAS UNDERWAY A CAMPAIGN TO RECRUIT ABLE
YOUNG PERSONS TO CARRY OUT AND TO MONITOR THE PROGRAMS THAT
THE GOVERNMENT WANTS IMPLEMENTED. THE MIDDLE GRADE
BUREAUCRATS ARE, IN THE MAIN, WORTHLESS AND INCAPABLE, AND
THE BRIGHT YOUNG ONES LARGELY UNKNOWN TO THOSE NOW
IN POWER. DURING THE PAST FIVE MONTHS THE GOVERN-
MENT HAS BEEN SO BUSY PUTTING OUT FIRES THAT IT HAS
NOT HAD THE TIME TO CONCENTRATE MORE EFFORT ON
COHERENT, SHORT AND LONG TERM PLANNING, ON DOING A
BETTER JOB OF INFORMING THE PUBLIC ABOUT THE GOVERN-
MENT'S PROGRAMS, OR ON RECRUITING THE ABLE MEN NEEDED
TO PUT TOGETHER AND IMPLEMENT THE GOVERNMENT'S PROGRAMS.
AT THE SAME TIME NIPHAT SEVERELY CONDEMNED THE IVORY
TOWER ATTITUDE OF THE ACADEMICS WHO ARE SO WILLING TO
CRITICIZE INDISCRIMINATELY BUT WHO SIT ON THEIR HANDS
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WHEN THEY HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO ACT CONCRETELY TO
IMPLEMENT REFORMS WHICH COULD CORRECT THE OBJECTS OF
THEIR CRITICISMS.

11. COMMENT. AMERICANIZED AND AGGRESSIVE, NIPHAT
GAVE A DYNAMIC PICTURE OF WHAT IS GOING ON IN THE SAP
INNER CIRCLES. HIS STRESS WAS THAT JUST AS FORMER
PRIME MINISTER SANYA THAMMASAK'S SOLE PURPOSE
WAS TO WRITE A CONSTITUTION, KHUKRIT'S IS TO STAY IN
POWER, COMMUNICATE AN IMAGE OF CONFIDENCE, AND MAKE THE
PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM AN ACCEPTABLE WAY OF LIFE. WHILE
THE KHUKRIT GOVERNMENT HAS MADE PROGRESS TOWARD ITS
GOALS, HE FELT IT HAS NOT TOTALLY COME TO GRIPS WITH
THE NECESSITY TO PROJECT AN IMAGE OF DIRECTION TO
THE PUBLIC AT LARGE.
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